APPENDIX 4: EVALUATION CRITERIA – BENCHMARKS AND REVIEW PROCESS

Following is the process that will be used to review proposals and determine final awards.

First, every ATBC proposal will be evaluated by a minimum of three reviewers (usually five or more), including at least one NFWF program staff member, at least one external, technical expert, and at least one representative from an ATBC funding agency partner. All reviewers agree to comply with a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policy and receive training on reviewing proposals.

Proposals will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored based on the extent to which they meet the criteria of the five categories below, which correspond to the evaluation criteria listed in the ATBC RFP and the questions in the proposal sections and narrative. Reviewers consider the degree to which the proposals align with these criteria when determining the score for each category and provide written comments on their assessments. Each of the criteria will be evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is insufficient, 2 is significantly deficient, three is satisfactory, four is excellent and five is outstanding. The benchmarks below that are associated with the criteria are intended as a guide for reviewers and applicants may consider them when preparing their proposals. It is important to note that a score of 1 or 2 for any individual criterion can result in a proposal being turned down for funding regardless of high scores in other categories.

Once all of the proposals are reviewed based on the extent to which they meet the five criteria, final funding decisions will be based on proposal scoring as well as additional factors applied to the overall slate of funded projects, which may include: geographic distribution of projects, variety of ATBC program priorities addressed, representation of project type and applicant, alignment with available funding, and performance on prior and/or current NFWF grants.

Program Goals and Priorities	
Scale	**Description**
1	Project does not address program priorities nor does it align with agency funding priorities.
2	Project somewhat addresses one program priority but does not align with agency funding priorities. Project lacks specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.
3	Project addresses one or more program priorities and aligns somewhat with agency funding priorities. Project has at least one specific, quantifiable performance metric to evaluate project success.
4	Project addresses two or more program priorities and aligns with agency funding priorities. Project has more than one specific, quantifiable performance metric to evaluate project success.
5	Project addresses three or more program priorities and aligns with agency funding priorities. Project has multiple specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.
Technical Merit	
1	Significant concern that project is not technically sound or feasible as proposed. The proposal omits a work plan or timeline. Project does not engage technical experts in planning, design, and/or implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant omits information on how proposed work will lead to other projects.
2	Some concern that project may not be technically sound and feasible. The proposal includes a limited work plan and timeline. Project negligibly engages technical experts in planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant notes that efforts may lead to other projects but does not justify the assertion.
3	Project is likely technically sound and feasible but lacks sufficient detail. The proposal includes a basic work plan and timeline. Project engages technical some experts in project planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant includes basic information on how efforts could lead to other projects.
4	Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear work plan and timeline but some details are questionable. Project engages technical experts in project planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant demonstrates how efforts will lead to implementation projects, but some justification is unclear.
5	Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design, and implementation to ensure activities are technically sound and feasible. For Planning proposals, the applicant clearly and logically demonstrates how efforts will lead to implementation projects.

Conservation Plan or Indigenous Knowledge	
1	Project is entirely unrelated to an existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, or recovery plan, nor is it informed by Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Proposal does not include or explain current capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan.
2	Project is somewhat related to one existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, or recovery plan or includes basic incorporation of IK. Proposal notes but does not describe current capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan.
3	Project contributes to one existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, or recovery plan or is meaningfully informed by IK. Proposal describes how project utilizes capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates the degree to which the project activities are connected to outcomes and goals set forth in a plan.
4	Project contributes significantly to one or more existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, or recovery plans or is meaningfully informed by and incorporates IK. Proposal describes how project ensures capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates the degree to which the project will advance outcomes and goals set forth in a plan(s).
5	Project meaningfully advances one or more existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, or recovery plans or is wholly guided by IK. Proposal describes how project establishes and adaptively manages capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates outcomes and goals set forth in a plan(s) that will be achieved.
Partnership and Community Impact	
1	The project is not supported by a partnership or lacks capacity. The applicant does not engage or contribute to the capacity of local community members, leaders and other relevant or impacted stakeholders.
2	The project appears to be supported by a partnership with sufficient capacity, but proposal lacks details. The applicant acknowledges but does not engage local community members, leaders and other relevant stakeholders in the project. Project does not develop capacity in non-traditional partners, engage an underserved community, uplift Tribal and Indigenous led efforts, or boost the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21st Century Conservation Service Corps).
3	The project is supported by a narrow but adequate partnership. The applicant informs, partners with, and engages with some local community members, leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project. Project is likely to do one of the following: develops capacity in non-traditional partners, engages an underserved community, uplifts Tribal and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develops the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21st Century Conservation Service Corps).

4	The project is supported by a comprehensive partnership with necessary expertise and capacity. The applicant partners with, elevates, and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project but may omit some key constituencies. Project directly engages non-traditional partners or underserved communities and broadens the sustained impact from the project. Project is likely to do more than one of the following: develops capacity in non-traditional partners, uplifts Tribal and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develops the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21st Century Conservation Service Corps).
5	The project is supported by a robust partnership with necessary expertise and capacity. The applicant partners with, elevates, and engages collaboratively with or directly represents diverse local community members, leaders, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project. Project engages non-traditional partners or communities—or are applicants themselves—thereby broadening the sustained impact from the project. Project develops capacity in non-traditional partners, uplifts Tribal and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develops the restoration workforce (i.e. AmeriCorps and 21st Century Conservation Service Corps).
Budget	
1	Amount requested is not proportionate to proposed outcomes and project is not cost-effective. Costs are not allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. Match is insufficient. Costs are not justified.
2	Amount requested does not seem proportionate to proposed outcomes and project is likely not cost-effective. Some costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget does not include enough detail to determine overall cost effectiveness. Match contributions are unclear. The costs are not reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.
3	Amount requested is somewhat proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are mostly allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes some details, but overall cost effectiveness is unclear. Match contributions are likely sufficient but lack details. The costs are somewhat reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.
4	Amount requested is proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes sufficient details to assess overall cost effectiveness. Match is sufficient and most details are clear. The costs are largely reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.
5	Amount requested is proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes robust detail enabling a clear picture of overall cost effectiveness. Match is sufficient, detailed, and fully eligible. Costs are reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed. The budget and match include sufficient detail and justification to instill confidence that proposed outcomes will be achieved.